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the Declining
Village



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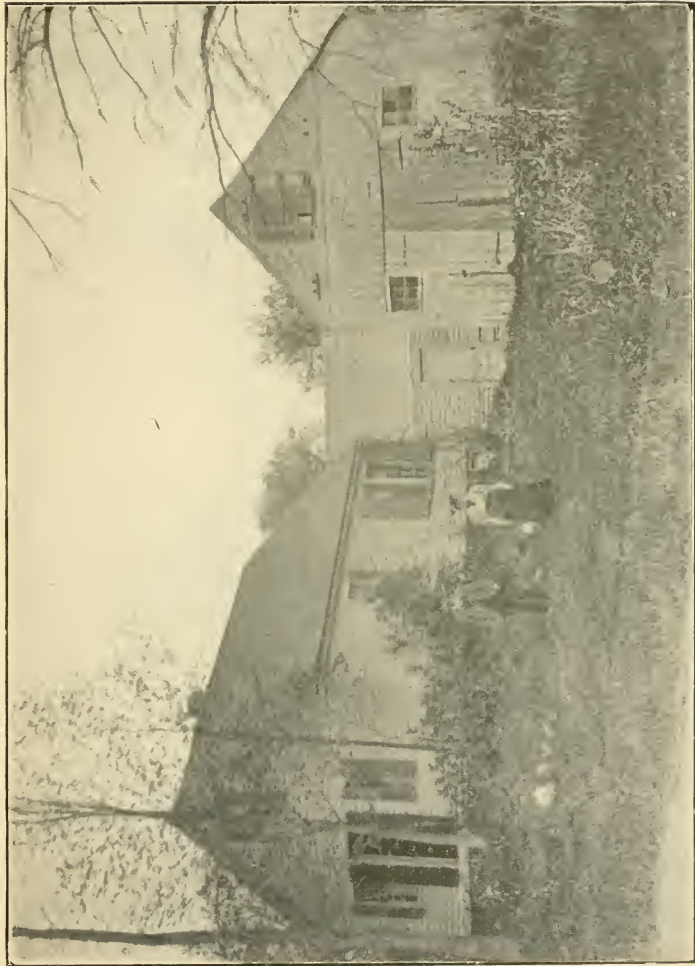
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GEORGE W. NIMS.



Home of my Childhood.

THE DECLINING VILLAGE ;

— OR —

My Old New England Home

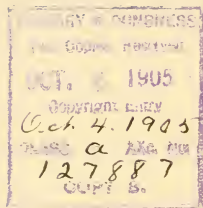
BY

GEORGE WASHINGTON NIMS,

Author of "A Keepsake More Precious Than Klondike Gold,"
"Golden Lines of Wisdom for the Young," "Uncle Reuben's
Adventures Abroad," "The Deserted Farm," "Forsaken by
the World," "The Nineteenth Century," "Mother in
Poetry and Song," "The Quartrain Instructor of
Youth," "Sweetheart and Bride in Poetry
and Song," "Mammon in Verse Land,"
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and Friend to Old Age."

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THE
DECLINING VILLAGE
. OR .
My Old New England Home.

Sterling! of thee again I love to muse,
Of thy sequestered scenes and rustic views,
That to my childhood's vision seemed so fair
When 'midst thy charms, I dwelt so free from care,
Of objects that will ne'er forgotten be,
While human hearts can love and feel for thee,
Of thy fair western Ville,* my boyhood's home,
Where oft my childish feet were wont to roam
When pleasure sweetly smiled, as flowery May,
And I, where daisies blow, was prone to stay

* West Sterling, Mass.

When cheerful plenty joy and sunshine brought
And fond contentment saws of wisdom taught,
When budding Spring so beautifully bloomed
And fragrant sweets thy charming vales perfumed,
When I was living childhood's golden days
And loudly singing its entrancing lays.

Once more, in thought, dear Ville! I come to view
My humble home, that I in childhood knew;
But ah, how changed! Another fold reside
Where those I love, were long my joy and pride,
Within the cosy cot that sheltered me
When I from trouble, want, and care was free;
Where parents kind my boyish heart would cheer
With merry jokes and smiles to me so dear,
Where sweet maternal love made my young life
To me more joyous seem, and banished strife.
Could I those happy days bring back again,
And lo, so heartily with pleasure train;

If golden seasons fraught with happiness
Would from the past return to cheer and bless,
Oh! what would seem too valuable to give?
If for a few brief hours, I could so live,
If in the cottage I shall ne'er forget,
I could again with friends, familiar, set;
If I could walk fair Ville! thy streets again
And on thy greens with boyhood's playmates train,
Lo! as of yore, when I was fond of play,
Of strolling with companions young and gay,
Through thy fair vales where peace and comfort
 bide,
And distant roam unrest and haughty pride;
Where virtue dwells and justice rules supreme,
And life partakes of sweet contentment's cream;
Where fair play justly deals with one and all,
And none in folly's pits are known to fall;
Where wealth, unfairly gained, no welcome finds,

And liberty with worth and honor dines;
For tyrants' oaths are sounds to thee unknown,
And Afric's slaves lo, here do never moan;
As freedom is the watchword everywhere,
With those who patriotism's colors wear;
Where rosy Summer lives her longest day—
Cheering alike the thoughtful and the gay,
Where bounteous harvests deck the well-tilled
vale,

And none do hear gaunt famine's woful wail;
Where Winter's ice and snow cause fun and play
For silvery skates, for coasting-sled and sleigh.
But—but to-day, declining are thy charms,
Thy influence and cultivated farms,
Thy day and generation thou hast seen;
So, from the past, I must thy history glean;
Now I, to thee, in fancy come again
To tread the soil where I was wont to train.

Now, altered are the playgrounds once I knew,
The leafy dell and fields where daisies grew.
Strange faces greet me, as I walk thy streets,
When I am seeking for thy calm retreats,
Lo! wondering who I am, who I can be
That travels through thy vales so light and free.
Now, as of yore, still gently flows the brook
Through lowlands green, by many a shady nook,
Along the base of Princeton's grass-clad hill,
Close by an object dear—the old grist-mill;
In whose cool water I was wont to wade
When I with happiness so careless strayed,
Where minnows wee and shiners fair I caught
Beneath the wooden bridge where they were
 fraught.
Its very name recalls the past to me—
The cheery days when I from want was free,
When, near its banks, the fragrant May-flowers
 grew,

And many a bright-eyed violet, fair to view;
When in the birchy grove, not far away,
Beneath their slender limbs I used to play
With comrades that I never more shall see—
Who were, when I was young, so kind to me.
Flow on fair stream as gently as of yore;
Flow on, flown on till time shall be no more;
Thou dear reminder of life's happiest days
I would thy waters crown with memory's bays.
Lo, here and there, what changes now I see
Lone Ville, since long ago I dwelt with thee!
How quiet seem to me thy thoroughfares.
Ay, ay, how dear thy haunts, though free from
cares;
How few thy hallowed scenes desire to view,
Or on thy green remembrance' flowers would
strew!
But I cannot forget where I was reared—
The place that to my heart is so endeared.

Where parents, now no more, were kind to me,
Whose smiling faces I in fancy see.
Dear Ville! however changed thy landmarks seem,
My heart with loving thoughts for thee dost teem,
And ever will, while I can love and feel,
Whilst I can take an interest in thy weal.
Where the flagstaff once stood, I stand to-day,
Beneath where floated high its banner gay
On holidays—the dear Red, White and Blue—
To what brave patriots love, lo! to be true,
The glorious emblem of sweet liberty,
Whose silken folds I then so liked to see;
That fired the life and courage, ay, in all,
From aged sires to lively children, small,
Who lightly danced and sung so merrily,
With cheery hearts so happy, light, and free.
Marching like loyal soldiers, brave and strong,
With steady step the village streets along.

How happy then, I felt, these haunts among!
Where golden hours were passed and pleasure
 sung

Her sweet, entrancing lays, so full of life,
When seeds of fun and joyfulness were rife,
While those I prize would comfort, bless, and
 cheer,

And cause unpleasantness to disappear.

Declining Village, how I feel for thee!

Now, I the signs of slow decay can see,

When I time's cruel ravages behold—

That long on objects dear to thee have told.

So, fond remembrance pleads again with me

To think of charms which once belonged to thee,

To wander through the vales and o'er the hills

My boyhood knew, and by the water-mills;

To view the ponds that oft I strayed around

With angling rod to sling upon the ground

The wily pickerel, pout and slimy eel,
When at excitement's shrine 'twas joy to kneel;
Where oft my childish patience was so tried,
When I unlucky seemed, and I would bide
In sore suspense, through many a cloudy day,
When I longed that good luck would come my
way;

Where, when success my labors crowned, I felt
As though some unseen power with me had dealt.
Ah! merry days, and seasons fraught with glee,
How hallowed to my heart their memory!
How I would like to feel as I did then
When I so freely roamed through field and fen,
And in the Bailey brook I sought for trout—
But not in vain—and tarried long about!
When clouded was the sun's entrancing beams
And gently flowed the winding meadow streams,
When o'er the mead fair blossoms sweetly smiled

And I with line and rod time's moments whiled,
When happiness did blessings on me shower
And I could linger in good-nature's bower;
Ere I the pangs of gnawing hunger felt,
And I with kind and loving parents dwelt;
Ere disappointments came my hopes to blight,
When life's pathways so teemed with prospects
 bright;

Ere I had known that golden hopes deceive,
That those who laugh may be the first to grieve.
The cherry-trees that in our front-yard grew
'Twill never be my lot again to view,
For one, I long have known, the axe applied
And soon laid low the objects of my pride;
Where many an hour I did in comfort spend
Among their boughs, when nimble hands would
 lend

Their welcome aid, the crimson gems to pluck

On many a balmy day with bounteous luck;
For, down they fell, when loaded limbs I shook
With youthful ardor strong, then up would look
To scan the branches o'er, which tempting hung
With luscious fruit where lively songsters sung,
Where I would feast, till I was satisfied,
And sit contentedly its boughs astride.
The maples and the pines, I planted once,
Hard by where oft the wily tabby hunts,
Along the border of our garden fair,
Close by the apple-tree that used to bear
Beside our kitchen window many a year,
On which, to light, the robins did not fear,
I seek in vain to find—for they are gone—
Which makes the garden seem to me forlorn,
For I had learned to value them, and lo!
But a few years, it was their lot to grow;
So had I never left my village home

With parents dear, in other vales to roam,
Perhaps to-day their forms I should have seen
And loudly laud their shades of living green.
But the young trees, my brother long ago
Set out, again I see them sweetly blow—
The varied trees of apple, plum, and pear,
That in the autumn-time do richly bear,
And on the barn, his grape-vine's twining still,
As though it were obliged to heed his will,
Whose purple clusters seem, to view, so fair,
And to the appetite—a banquet rare.
As in the past, the swallows visit here
And in their downy nests their loved ones rear,
And in midair they fly as gracefully,
And just as interesting seem to me;
The birds admired by all, that I don't hear
In my adopted home, to me so dear,
In Boston by the broad Atlantic sea,

Where proudly floats the flag of liberty;
Lo! where I've wished, when summer-time drew
 near,
That it might be my lot to visit here,
So I should in a cooler place sojourn
And lessons wise from rural Nature learn;
So I might feel the mountain breezes cool
And bathe my brow in some refreshing pool,
From city heat and din far, far away,
Where in life's spring-time I was glad to stay;
To view the cot, my boyhood so esteemed,
Where everything to me was what it seemed;
Where I was goodness' precepts early taught
And wisdom's golden teachings daily sought;
Where love of mother, God, and home I learned,
And truths ennobling to the mind discerned;
Where I with right and kindness often dined
And good advice a welcome warm would find.

Alas! no parents meet my longing gaze,
No brother sweetly smiles, as in the days
When I was young; still memory's torch I see,
Which lights again these lonely rooms for me;
While from the hallowed past, on fancy's wings,
Sweet joys return to cheer like balmy springs,
With long-remembered years, in comfort spent,
Beneath its well-worn roof, where friendship lent
Her genial charms and pure maternal love
Was prone to kindly bless, like God above;
Which now recalls a mother's smiles, I miss,
A mother's tender care and heart-felt kiss—
The care that none but faithful mothers give
To those who in the realm of childhood live;
For, like a kindly mother, who can feel?
Or at love's altar so devoutly kneel?
Lo, who is so inclined to sympathize,
Or kindnesses in life so highly prize?

!

Though humble was my lot when here I dwelt,
Where pride and vanity have rarely knelt,
Still through the livelong day contentment
 reigned,
And none the love of lowly living feigned;
Affection smiled and happiness would cheer,
And sunshine beamed throughout the varied year;
For happiness cannot be bought with gold,
Or pride a member be of justice' fold;
Nor vain or haughty minds, inspire the wise,
While wisdom dost right-living highly prize.
So here, love's cheery blossoms sweetly bloomed
On every hand and peace and comfort roomed;
Where funny jokes a father kind would crack,
Which in good-nature ne'er was known to lack;
Where cheering words a mother dear would speak—
Who shunned the haughty and revered the meek—
Where a good brother made home brighter seem

And rays of cheerfulness were wont to teem,
Where, when the glittering sun set in the west,
My weary limbs returned to calmly rest;
Then 'round our cottage hearth, with parents kind,
I passed mild eve away with joyful mind;
Living the golden hours but childhood knows,
Where balmy Nature's softest zephyr blows;
'Midst hallowed scenes which memory loves so
well

That in my heart will never cease to dwell.
Could I again such rosy seasons live,
When love and sunshine beamed, what would I
give?

Ere life's deceiving hopes my pathway strewed
With prickly thorns or grief my cheeks bedewed,
Ere cruel trouble strove my peace to blight
Or tribulations dimmed my prospects bright;
Ere with a selfish world I had to deal

Or envy's darts it was my lot to feel.
Beside our old front-door a change, I see,
Where flowers bloomed, so beautiful to me,
For here, alas! the morning-glories blow
No more; or fragrant roses blush and glow,
Or purple lilacs fair—so pleasing to behold
To those who by their leafy bushes strolled.
The bow-back tree that by the back door grew,
Where balmy breezes through its branches blew,
Has aged grown, I see; whose apples, sweet
In summer-time, it was my lot to eat.
Lo! of the friends of by-gone days, how few
Dear Ville, thy peaceful vales now wander through,
How few remain with thee on this bright day
Of those who gathered on thy greens to play!
For long ago, some left thy shades to roam,
To seek abroad a more sight-pleasing home,
Far, far away from thy entrancing scenes,

From thy flower-spangled vales and showy greens,
From haunts where friendship loves to linger long
And cheerfulness can sing her sweetest song,
Where healthful pastimes find a welcome warm
And spotless honor weathers every storm;
To dwell amidst the city's noisy strife,
Where mad confusion chills the joys of life
And wanton crime destroys and snares beguile,
And mischief thrives and every artful wile;
Where heartless greed on justice loves to tread,
And villains are to sin and folly wed;
Where wealth and fame to please unfeeling pride,
Look down upon the poor and want deride;
While others still on neighboring farms do plod
And cultivate their fertile acres broad.
Though I feel lonely now, declining Ville,
Because thou art so changed—I love thee still,
And shall while I'm to gratitude a friend,

Whilst cheerfully I can thy name defend.
Beside the old mill-pond the shallow pool
Remains, which proved to be a swimming-school
To many a child who in it learned to swim,
To exercise, full well, the arm and limb.
Along the stream that from fair Princeton flows,
As in sweet seasons passed, the wild-grape grows,
And on the Roper farm, the same woods stand
Where I was wont to hunt with gun in hand,
Below the chestnut-trees, I loved to view
On whose high branches nuts so thickly grew;
The trees on which the bluejays used to light,
Whose plumage was so gaudy, sleek, and bright,
Near where the wily partridge made its home,
And I in autumn-time was wont to roam;
Where squirrels dwelt, and I would lie in wait
To seal with heartless lead their earthly fate—
What I would not again, lo, e'en for gold

Be guilty of, till I join cruelty's fold;
For to dumb animals now I am kind,
And they in me a friend indeed do find;
For oh! what right have I to slay for fun,
Or, needlessly, to use a club or gun?
Children too oft, in sport, act cruelly
And to blind folly, love to bend the knee;
So parents ought to teach, for kindness' sake,
That it is wrong life needlessly to take;
And to dumb animals and birds that do
No harm, they should be friendly, kind, and true.
Where long was known the district-school to stand
Old Chocksett Number Three, by breezes fanned,
To-day, the green grass waves above the spot
I used to call "the dear old school-house lot,"
When knowledge smiled at all who gathered there,
And learning made the artless rustic stare,
Where many a lively child with mischief strayed,

And funny tricks were often cutely played;
The teacher's bell no longer tolls the hour
Or manifests its domineering power;
The rule now calmly lies, that once I felt,
For having at the shrine of whispering knelt;
The tutor's voice, I never more shall hear,
Or his unkindly threats regard or fear;
For he in realms unseen by mortal eye
Now dwells—perchance, above the starry sky.
Where are his pupils on this tranquil day,
When Nature smiles like lasses fair in May?
Oh! numbers in New England now reside
And o'er its hills and through its valleys ride,
Where ruin and misery cyclones never bring,
But peace prevails and cheers like flowery spring;
Where righteousness, the wise and good revere,
And patriotism's shrines inspire and cheer;
Others in the Southland now 'bide—a clime

Where grows the lemon, fig, banana, lime—
Hard by the cotton-fields—world famous now—
That cause old Europe's plains to meekly bow;
On rice plantations toil, with worthy zeal,
Their bread to earn, to live and fairly deal;
While others on the prairies of the West
Have been by industry and plenty blest;
While others still, have drawn life's final breath,
And passed the portals of unfeeling death;
With whom I liked to chum, so kind were they
When we together used to rove and play.
Alas! alone, I'm left to linger here,
To wander and to think of friends sincere;
To view the scenes around the grass-grown lot,
That never'll by my memory be forgot;
The Wilder and the Whitney farms, so near,
That to my school-boy heart were fondly dear,
The narrow brook that flowed so handy by,

Where I was wont to watch the dragon-fly,
Whose brilliant-colored wings I so admired,
When Nature's dazzling charms my fancy fired;
The Osgood and the Sawyer hill, so fair,
Where well-tilled farms their golden harvests bear.
The play-ground and the mowing's verdant green;
Where daisies blow to deck the sylvan scene;
The flowery fields and apple-orchards, where
The trees I valued so were wont to bear
Near Wilder's barn, where swallows love to build
Their nests beneath the eaves—with down well
filled.

O'er yonder, stands new Chocksett Number Three,
Where children gather now as bright and free,
But they are strangers all—'tis sad to say—
Who to this shrine of knowledge wend their way;
A few, compared with what there used to be,
When faces, now I miss, were fair to see,

Gather where they can weighty truths discern
And useful lessons from their teachers learn.
Lo! as I look around sweet peace prevails,
For vice nor crime disturb these quiet dales;
Ay, as I muse and on farm-houses old
Do gaze, where industry and blessings hold
Their wonted sway, and patience loves to cheer
The hearts of those who honesty revere;
As when misfortune from me distant strayed,
And with ill-treatment I was rarely paid;
Where calm contentedness made life so sweet,
When comrades true I used to daily greet;
Ere trials, unforeseen, my pathway crossed,
Or I had been by the proud-minded bossed;
Ere those I trusted had a base part played,
Or I with discontent had dined or strayed;
Ere I had known what 'twas to envied be,
Or by the mean was treated shabbily;

Ere at the shrine of sorrow I had knelt,
Or cold misfortune's trials keenly felt;
When I, with those who sunshine wooed, did roam
And in the bowers of friendship felt at home.
Oh, peaceful Ville! to me how lone and still!
But for the pottery shop and wooden mill
Deserted thou indeed wouldst seem to be,
For, signs of thrift, I sigh in vain to see;
So quiet now, so little to attract
The thrifty sons of enterprise and tact;
'Tis plain to every one—fair Village, plain,
'There's little to attract one's thoughts again;
Now strangers dwell where friends abode of yore,
Dear trusty friends who walk thy streets no more.
The dark-red mill, where workmen were employed
When I was young, the flames one night destroyed;
Where many a laboring man did nobly toil
Like neighbors on their soft but stony soil;

That they might honestly their dollars earn,
And lessons wise in labor's forum learn;
Where thrifty toilers labored faithfully
And followed in the steps of honesty,
Ay, in the busy mill of long ago
From which the water used to swiftly flow;
The mill that I in fancy still can view,
In which there used to be so much to do;
That long the village blest with industry
And humble toil its fruit was wont to see,
When signs of thrift, on every side, were seen,
And children loved to frolic on the green;
But on the self-same site another stands
Bedecked with spotless white and broader bands'
In silence now, with little to attract,
Compared with one of old that labor packed.
'Tis true! the farmer here is wont to come
In harvest-time, when hoary frosts benumb.

With corn to grind—raised on his native green,
Far from the restless city's bustling scene;
Where smiling plenty cheers his humble lot—
As priceless lessons of the past have taught.
The miller's house I ne'er again shall view,
Or the old oaks that byit handy grew,
Where my true friend and schoolmate dwelt,
With whom at friendship's shrine, I often knelt;
Who was my favorite chum and playmate dear,
That now, I sadly miss while standing here;
The miller's son—and William was his name—
Who trod life's stage unknown to envied fame,
Whose goodness from my memory never'll fade,
But be as fresh as spring-time's greenest blade;
For how can I forget a faithful friend
Whose words and deeds with spotless honor blend?
Ay, how forget a friend, who wished me well,
Wherever I should choose to roam or dwell?

Therefore, the Nichols'-place, because of him,
Will to my recollection ne'er grow dim;
But rather dearer seem, as time rolls on,
When I, in fancy, see where he was born;
Though but a cellar now remains to me
'Tis plain, 'twill never cease to hallowed be.
The hall, the village prized, no longer's seen,
Where once the preacher told, with humble mien,
The story of the Cross—affecting tale—
To those, who to live godly, sometimes fail;
Where far-famed Earle* his telling power revealed,
And, touchingly, to thoughtless minds appealed;
Then, then, the people stood in awe amazed,
Through eloquence that from the preacher blazed;
When hearts were cleansed and stubborn wills
gave way,
And softened under grace, beneath his sway;

* Rev. A. B. Earle.

With magic skill the meaning of the Cross
Expounded well—declaring all's not gloss
In this wide world of righteousness and sin,
That men must justly live, if they would win
A crown of righteousness in Heaven above,
Where angels dwell, with joy and peace and love;
If they would on the highest plane abide
And with the followers of goodness side;
If they would make the most of human life
And shun the paths that lead to godless strife;
If they would nobler grow from day to day
And love to wisely tread the upward way.
With motives so upright he labored hard
To put the careless soul upon its guard,
To bid it set its fondest hopes on high—
On things that gold and favors ne'er can buy.
So, once again, for efforts so esteemed,
That with the kindly zeal of goodness gleamed,

Bid admiration praise his labors here,
While fond affection sheds its sweetest tear;
Though long ago his mission here was o'er,
And bless the tongue that speaks to them no more.
I see, in fancy, now his portly form,
And hear the words that woke their hearts by
storm;

The Sunday eves , I well remember now,
When piety adorned his thought-worn brow;
Though but a stripling then, I loved to hear
The good man's voice that pleased my listening
ear,

Who in the steps of Jesus loved to tread
And by His matchless teachings to be led.
The Willard-place is little changed, I see,
O'er which, in summer-time, I strolled so free;
But the old hemlock woods my boyhood knew,
Where bows I sought and arrows swiftly flew,

I miss to-day; as I do one who played
So oft with me, when we in childhood strayed;
For genial Fred now dwells in a new home,
Not far away from where he used to roam—
A playmate that I never shall forget
Till to ingratitude I love to be in debt.
Dear Ville! from vales like thine, how often spring
Talents, whose fame from pole to pole dost ring!
How often youth, by worth endowed, they raise!
How oft distinguished men, that win the praise
Of nations young and old, with records bright,
Who walk in honor's paths and champion right!
Poets renowned and clergymen divine,
And orators with eloquence so fine;
Merchants of worth and scholars famed for lore,
Whose influence is felt the wide world o'er;
Statesmen and rulers wise and heroes grand,
Who guide the ship of State in many a land.

Well may the world rejoice and safely rest,
When by such followers of justice blest;
When by the friends of right and honor ruled,
Who, in such calm retreats, were wisely schooled
In every virtue and in every grace
That can adorn or bless the human race.
The village hall upon the Nichols' lot
Will ne'er again with cheerfulness be fraught,
For by unfeeling fire, long years ago,
It was destroyed—the hall that I miss so;
That I so prized, which once I sought with joy,
Where pleasant hours I spent, when but a boy,
With kindred past and gone and playmates dear,
That now cause me to shed remembrance' tear,
While listening to the whippoorwill's loud song,
And I, in fancy, see the genial throng
That used to gather here, the friendly smile,
The bright and pleasing looks, so free from guile;

While thinking of the friends of the old hall
Who answered long ago death's solemn call;
Where young and old, alike, were wont to come,
And hospitality was never dumb;
Where lecturers the young would sometimes teach,
And ministers would powerful sermons preach;
Where music's sweet entrancing strains were
 heard,
That to a rapturous pitch my feelings stirred.
The old Leach house, where Boston boarders
 dwelt,
And summer's balmy breezes gladly felt,
In which they found sweet rest and wholesome
 fare
And for a season bade adieu to care;
Time hath not roughly used—'tis plain to see—
Or it would not familiar look to me;
If 'twere not for its homely coat of red,

So dark, which seems to be to plainness wed;
So different from the pleasing coat of white
Of former days, so cheerful, clear and bright;
Where strangers now reside, unknown to me,
Beneath a roof so dear to memory.
In ruins, not far away, a building old
Is seen, that sheltered once a happy fold;
Where one I thought so beautiful and fair,
Sweet Edna Fitts, who long resided there,
Ere 'twas her hapless lot, when bright as May,
To fade and die and pass from earth away;
Who was the village belle, with beauty fraught,
Whose girlhood charms will never be forgot
By those that knew her well, who homage pay
To beauty's sweetest flowers in spring-time's day;
The house where she with loving parents dwelt
When at the shrine of happiness she knelt;
The house that sheltered long the village store,

Where oft was heard loud laughter's hearty roar;
And the good-natured loved to congregate
And over current topics long debate;
Where stories old and new were gladly heard—
Some rational, but others most absurd;
Where lively jokes the young were quick to hear
And rare, indeed, was seen a heartless sneer;
Where the post-office too a home once found
When signs of thrift did everywhere abound,
Where I would come when twilight-time drew near
When from my absent friends I wished to hear.
The old front porch I miss, where I would sit
At dawn of eve and listen to the wit
Of those whom mirthfulness had well endowed,
That furrows in the soil of fun had plowed;
The friends who long beneath the turf have lain,
That never more on earth will entertain.
What joy! old Princeton hill again I see—
The self-same hill indeed, oh! can it be?

Where oft in winter-time I coasted long
On runners smooth among the jolly throng
That used to gather here, the time to pass,
With hardy lads and many a winsome lass;
Where o'er the crust our sleds like lightning flew,
Adown the slanting hill, the Lone Star true,
The first in every race, the first to lead,
To land upon the winter-frozen mead.
Alas! the winters come to find us not
Lo, where, for pleasure, we in vain ne'er sought;
Where lads and lasses strove hard to excel
When none their noisy shouting wished to quell,
Where a good time the children always had,
For fun was king and hearts were never sad.
In autumn-time, the same tall chestnut trees
Bear, as of yore, when frost begins to freeze
The prickly burrs, to bid them nimbly fall
Upon the ground, down from their stations tall,

Just as they did when I had clubbed their limbs,
 When I was singing childhood's favorite hymns.
 The blueberry bushes on the Roper farm
 Are fruitful still in pastures wide and calm,
 Through which my childish feet have often
 strolled

When Nature seemed to me more dear than gold;
 Yes! plentiful, lo, as they used to be
 When I, their gems, so blue, was pleased to see,
 While wandering through these old familiar glades
 O'er shrubby knolls and by refreshing shades;
 Beneath the summer sun, in hopes to pick
 My tin-pail full where they were large and thick.
 The same dark pool remains in Greenwood's mead,
 Surrounded with the verdant bulrush reed,
 And, as of yore, the friendly frog leaps nimbly
 'round

And loudly croaks the same unpleasing sound.

The walnut trees and pennyroyal still
Are seen hard by the meadow's dreamy rill,
While all about, the hardy swale I meet,
Where, as of old, the cowslip blooms as sweet,
And, as I list, the bobolink I hear,
Whose cheery notes fall softly on my ear
As when perched on some green tree's spreading
limb

My watchful eyes so loved to gaze at him;
While blackbirds in the elm above my head
As proudly sing as when I used to tread
On miry bogs, in search of cowslips gay
In sweet spring-time on many a lovely day.
The smithy lingers still beside the brook,
Where business teemed of yore, but now forsook,
Beside the stately elms that long have stood
To cheer this law-abiding neighborhood;
Where once a joyless Shattuck breathed his last

And from sad scenes to unknown regions passed;
But on the Chandler farm to-day, I see
The signs of thrift, of toil and industry,
And, on its trees, the same high grade of fruit,
That can the most exacting fancy suit;
The farm on which was reared—who loves it still—
The present well-known mayor of Somerville,
Who for the cause of justice dares to fight
And bravely champions the laws of right;
Believing in the cause of righteousness,
Like one who loves his fellow-men to bless.
So many changes thou hast seen, dear Ville!
My mind, with sad regrets, I'm wont to fill;
Yet thy fair greens will ne'er deserted be
Till time has passed into eternity;
Thy calm retreats will never cease to please,
To fascinate as dost a fragrant breeze;
Though now declining, yet, deserted not,

As thou wilt never, never be forgot
While rural scenes the mind of man delights,
And men are pleased with Nature's fairest sights.
So many charms have flown that once I knew,
I still lament, with tears, their last adieu,
When I the past recall or think of thee,
Of cherished scenes I never more shall see,
When near Wauchusett's famous mount I dwelt
And gratefully its cooling breezes felt;
A friend in me thou'lt never fail to find
While I can love and feel with a sound mind,
Whilst hallowed seasons of the past can cheer
And to my heart thy hills and dales are dear;
While I, in thought, can see thy cheery greens,
And I delight to think of by-gone scenes,
A kind word I shall gladly speak for thee
Who in life's early morn was good to me.
Now, must I bid farewell to scenes so dear

To them, fair Ville! that I love to revere,
To old associations, now no more,
That lingers still on memory's fadeless shore;
Now, when so quiet seem thy streets by day
And thou a victim art, lo, to decay?
Ay, ay, how happy I again should be
If I could bring prosperity to thee,
If industry would thrift and plenty bring,
And bid thy vales with sweet contentment sing;
If I could make thee prosperous as of yore,
As when thy fields I used to ramble o'er;
Oh, then, how I should love to visit thee,
When scenes I cherish so, I long to see!
Alas! thy shades I now must leave to roam,
To journey back to my adopted home,
To cultured Boston by the deep-blue sea,
That long has been a city dear to me.
So now, declining Ville! I bid adieu

To thee, to objects old I love to view,
But thy fair charms my childhood loved so well,
I'll ne'er forget—how far away I dwell,
Though but one primrose mark thy lowly lot,
Lo! by thy friends, thou'lt never be forgot;
Thy fate, be what it may, remembrance will
Her homage pay and shine upon thee still.



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